



# PREVENTING GLOBAL FOOD CRISES

## FAO FOCUS AREA

Sustainability of efforts to fight hunger requires both short-term safety nets to provide immediate relief, and longer-term investments to increase national agricultural production and improve income potential. This twin-track approach, launched by FAO in 2003, is now embedded in the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA), adopted by the UN High Level Task Force on Global Food Security in reaction to the global food price crisis of 2007–08. It provides a route to soften the immediate blow of high food prices and address longer term measures for sustainable food security.

FAO provides expertise on both sides of this approach, especially focusing on steps to prevent market volatility. This includes working with governments to help them increase their agricultural production and at the same time developing market systems that provide timely and transparent information, enabling early reactions to quell nervous markets.

### **South-South Cooperation: developing countries support each other**

South-South Cooperation was introduced by FAO in the 1990s to set up technical assistance between developing countries, and facilitate their sharing of knowledge and experiences to help each other improve food security and nutrition. It also enables emerging economies that were traditionally recipients of aid to give back, in kind, through taking their knowledge and skills to other countries facing similar problems.

This blends with FAO's efforts to assist countries in developing National Programmes for Food Security, under which each country defines its own needs and goals, which can then be presented to resource partners for support. In December 2011, FAO co-signed agreements between the People's Republic of China and the Republics of Liberia and Senegal. China pledged to contribute both financial and technical assistance in helping the two countries implement their National Programmes for Food Security. To date, 51 South-South agreements have been signed and more than 1 600 developing country experts and technicians have been deployed to support other countries' food security initiatives.

### **FAO MARKET INFORMATION FOREWARNED OF FOOD CRISIS**

FAO, among the first organizations to recognize the impending food crisis in 2007, launched an Initiative on Soaring Food Prices, months before other agencies reacted to the situation. FAO led inter-agency assessment missions to 58 countries to identify immediate actions and catalyze government response and international support – raising public awareness of the crisis and identifying resources that helped some of the poorest countries avoid even worse disaster. On the heels of this crisis that spanned 2007–08 and saw prices spike up to 50 percent, the World Bank *World Development Report* called for placing agriculture at the centre of the development agenda, noting that agricultural growth is two to four times more likely to reduce rural poverty than growth in other economic sectors. Previous decades had seen the percentage of development assistance to agriculture fall from 19 percent in 1980 to three percent in 2006. Today it is five percent.



# EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

## NATIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR FOOD SECURITY WITH SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

FAO is assisting 20 countries in implementing National Programmes for Food Security and 39 others are in various stages of formulating theirs. In addition, four Regional Programmes for Food Security are in operation and 13 others are being prepared, with FAO promoting South-South Cooperation as a cost-effective vehicle for knowledge transfer.

### MEXICO

As the world's twelfth largest economy, Mexico is not considered a priority for development cooperation, yet over 40 percent of the country's population is poor and almost 20 percent is extremely poor living on less than USD 1 per day.

**PROCESS:** With FAO's support, Mexico's National Programme for Food Security (PESA) has grown from small pilot interventions that began in 2002 to become the main strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture, increasing availability and access to food and support services in the country's most marginalized areas.

**IMPACT:** PESA has helped 200 000 families in 18 states escape hunger and mobilized USD 650 million in agricultural investments with the potential to improve diets and lives of many more. FAO has worked with



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PESA to introduce improved cooking stoves, water tanks, containers for grain and greenhouses. Many of PESA's solutions were put forward by the project beneficiaries themselves.

### BANGLADESH

Although Bangladesh has tripled its rice production since independence in 1971, it requires new strategies and technologies to meet the challenges of feeding its dense and rapidly increasing population amidst dwindling water and land resources, and climate change pressure.

**PROCESS:** FAO introduced Climate Field Schools in Bangladesh, and supported the country in formulating a Country Investment Plan (CIP) for coordinating and mobilizing resources to improve food and nutrition security. It also included a plan for development of the southern delta. FAO had a major role in strengthening the capacities of the Ministries of Food and of Disaster Management through its National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme.

**IMPACT:** The CIP, now fully embedded within the Bangladesh Sixth Five-Year Plan, has enabled mobilization of additional resources from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP), DANIDA, and USAID.



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